



Department of Justice

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MONTGOMERY HURRICANE KATRINA FRAUDSTER TO SENTENCED TO 6 YEARS WITHOUT PAROLE

MONTGOMERY, ALA.—A Montgomery man, Jacob Warner, age 26, was sentenced to six years (72 months) imprisonment for his criminal conduct arising out of Hurricane Katrina fraud, U.S. Attorney Leura G. Canary announced today.

Previously, on October 10, 2007, Warner had pleaded guilty to four counts of theft of Government property. During the sentencing, held on January 18, 2008, United States District Court Judge W. Keith Watkins determined that Warner and others were part of a larger Hurricane Katrina fraud ring. Judge Watkins found that Warner and others stole nearly \$25,000 intended for the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Judge Watkins also enhanced Warner's sentence because of his extensive role as a manager or supervisor of the FEMA fraud conspiracy and for obstruction of the administration of justice.

According to the Hurricane Katrina Task Force, headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, this is the seventh longest sentence ever given for a case arising out of Hurricane Katrina or Rita fraud. The longest case also arose out of the Middle District of Alabama. In that case, Warner's sister, Bernetta LaShay Willis, was sentenced to 516 months in prison early this month.

When Warner is released, he will be required to repay FEMA the funds he stole.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Alabama is a member of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, created by the Department of Justice in September 2005 to deter, detect, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes. The Task Force is comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, and United States Attorneys' Offices from the Gulf Coast region and nationwide.

This matter was investigated the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, with of the assistance of the Middle District's Hurricane Katrina Task Force. The Middle District's Task Force consists of members from the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, and the United States Secret Service.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Christopher A. Snyder.

Thus far, the Middle District of Alabama has charged a total of 38 Hurricane Katrina and Rita fraud-related cases involving 44 different defendants.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721.

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